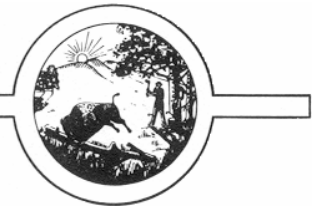


Indiana Department of Education



Division of Exceptional Learners

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MEMORANDUM

SE# 05-17

DATE: May 5, 2006

TO: Directors of Special Education
Early Childhood Coordinators

FROM: Robert A. Marra
Associate Superintendent

RE: ISTAR Early Childhood Timeline Revision

For the past two years, the Division of Exceptional Learners has harvested Early Childhood ISTAR assessment data. The data that was collected and utilized for past Annual Performance Reports was based on the total number of children reported in the December 1 Child Count. When the system was initially established, the Office of Special Education (OSEP) asked states to measure status and improvement in three child outcome areas: (1) positive social-emotional skills (2) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills including early language/communication, and early literacy, and (3) use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. This procedure required two data points annually which necessitated reassessment of all children who were in preschool the previous year, even those children who had progressed out of preschool.

In the most recent State Performance Plan from OSEP, more detailed instructions were provided. OSEP expectations:

"First Year (2/1/07) will be the status upon entry. Following years (starting with 2/1/08) will be progress from entry to exit or other naturally occurring point near exit for children who have received preschool services for six months or more."

In order to meet the new expectation, our ISTAR assessment timeline must be revised to capture scores at given age benchmarks and at exit. For data collection periods, we will divide the year into four quarters:

Q1: August 1 – October 31
Q2: November 1 – January 31
Q3: February 1 – April 30
Q4: May 1 – July 31

Effective immediately, all preschool children are to be assessed on the established schedule as a compliance expectation:

Entry: During the quarter of entrance
Annual: During the quarter of the child's birth month
Exit: During the quarter of exit

(If an entrance or exit assessment is done in the quarter of the birth month, one assessment serves both purposes.)

Implementing this new schedule may require fewer assessments in some cases and more in others. Under this new schedule, any preschool child with a disability in the early childhood program spanning more than two quarters (more than 6 months) that will be exiting the program in the 4th quarter will need an exit assessment before the end of the school year. If the ISTAR assessment is completed in the 4th quarter, it will eliminate

doing follow-up ISTAR assessments in kindergarten. Also, an exit assessment is only required for children in the early childhood program spanning more than two quarters (six months). If the preschool child was enrolled in quarters 3 and 4 (February 1 – End school) and is exiting the program prior to receiving services for six months, no exit assessment is required. A more frequent and consistent schedule of monitoring assessments will be necessary.

The following Questions and Answers are developed to provide further guidance.

Q. What happens if a child enters the early childhood program near the end of the quarter of entrance and the teacher is still unfamiliar with the child and cannot complete the assessment in the quarter of entrance?

A. If the ISTAR assessment is used as part of the eligibility process, this will provide the assessment information for entry. If this is not the case, the teacher will assess the child in the next quarter. The quarterly system provides a general framework for data collection.

Q. What happens if a child exits unexpectedly or exits the program in the same quarter as entry?

A. If the child is in the program spanning more than two quarters (six months or more) then an exit assessment is required. An ISTAR follow-up assessment at exit will not be necessary for children that are in the early childhood program less than two quarters (less than six months).

Q. How soon after entry and how close to exit do preschool children need to be assessed?

A. ISTAR ratings are to be completed by educators who know the skills of the child. In order to capture the most progress, consider assessing children as close to entry and exit as possible.

Q. Why is Indiana collecting outcome data on each child's birth month in addition to entrance and exit?

A. Federal reporting requires a calculation of the percentage of students who perform at a level commensurate with their peers. For this calculation, the assessments from the quarter of the birthday will be used. Federal reporting also requires a calculation of progress. This necessitates entry and exit data comparisons. By collecting data at exit, an assessment in kindergarten is not required in order to calculate progress in the last year of preschool.

The ISTAR assessment is designed to be a continuous process of measuring student performance in authentic situations. The ISTAR assessment documents progress of the child in relation to age and provides data for educational decision-making and instruction. The ISTAR assessment fulfills the State's obligation to document progress over the course of participation in the early childhood program. It also provides meaningful information to the parent and educator by updating the data each quarter in order to guide instruction and assisting with IEP development.

Q. What if a child exits from the early childhood program because the parent takes the child out after six months, then the child is re-enrolled several months later, would the original entry data be counted as the entry data or would new entry data need to be conducted.

A. The original entry data would be stored but the base would need to be reviewed and the assessment updated.

Q. Do all preschool children that are going to kindergarten need to be reassessed even though we just completed the April 30th assessment?

A. Yes. In order to obtain the exit data for the child exiting preschool in Quarter 4 (May1 – July 31) the teacher/SLP must open the record, confirm, and save it. When the teacher/SLP, completes the ISTAR assessment at least quarterly, no new basing is necessary. If the teacher or SLP has not completed the assessment in the quarter prior to the quarter of the student's birthday, then the basing is required before the assessment section can be accessed. Since the teacher/SLP has just finished the review for the April 30, 2006 deadline, it should not take long to meet the exit requirement by going through the assessment elements and

saving the data (generally less than five minutes per child). During this transition period, if the teacher or SLP does not complete the follow-up exit assessment while the child is in preschool, then the base and assessment will have to be completed in the 1st quarter after the child enters kindergarten for this upcoming year. The new timeline should eliminate this issue in the future.

Q. Do we need to do ISTAR assessments on kindergarten age children that remain in an early childhood program?

A. Yes.

Q. What happens if a child enters the preschool program in one district and then moves to another district?

A. Once the transfer has been registered in the STN system, the student's name will appear in the administrative accounts of the receiving district. Past assessment information will be accessible to the receiving district and the assessment schedule should be maintained.

Q. If a child with disability turns three in July, 2006 and begins receiving early childhood services in the upcoming school year (2006-2007), how many times will the child be assessed with ISTAR if the child remains in the early childhood program until age-eligible for kindergarten?

A.

Child turns three in July, 2006 IEP is initiated at the beginning of 2006-07 school year.	ISTAR assessment is completed at quarter of entrance (Q1: August 1 – October 31).
Children turns four in July, 2007 2 nd year of special education services	ISTAR assessment is completed in quarter of birthday month (Q 4 May 1 – July 31)
Child turns five in July, 2008 and exits early childhood program to enter kindergarten in fall of 2008. Kindergarten entrance date is 5 by August 1 st .	ISTAR assessment is completed in quarter of exit which also happens to be the quarter of birth month (Q 4 May 1 – July 31)

Q. How will the administrator and teacher track compliance and know which assessments are compliant and ready for state collection?

A. The compliance report will be designed to sort the children by the quarter of their birth. There will be a section sorting the children by the current quarter, the upcoming quarter, the quarter that is a half year away, and the past quarter. This compliance report will roll with each quarter to give a very easy view of the status of the assessments in each district. This report will be available on the administrative dashboard which is set for delivery in June.

Please note: due to the circumstance that the exit date is not captured in any of the technology, the local administrators will need to monitor exit assessment schedules.

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Should you have any questions, contact Sheron Cochran at 317-232-0567 or email scochran@doe.state.in.us.